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ABSTRACT

In order to assist the newly formed rehabilitation counseling program at Northeastern University in curriculum and instructional planning, a job task analysis was conducted. The sample consisted of 55 employed rehabilitation counselors in the New England region from both state agencies and rehabilitation facilities. The results of the study were in agreement with previous research on Rehabilitation Counselor Education (RCE) program content, indicating an emphasis on vocational counseling skills, community resources, and methods of client evaluation. However, contrary to previous research, the areas of job placement and followup received relatively moderate to low ratings, suggesting that the practitioners may feel that it might be more efficient and practical to relinquish these duties to support personnel and paraprofessionals. Although the small sample size prevents any wide spread generalizations, the job task outline could be a useful tool in the curriculum and instructional planning of other newly formed RCE programs. (Author/RC)

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Development of a Self-Report Inventory for Assessing Reactions to Program Content of a Rehabilitation Counseling Program

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Development of a Self-Report Inventory for Assessing Reactions to Program Content of a Rehabilitation Counseling Program[1]

The first concerted effort at the professional education of the rehabilitation counselor occurred after the enactment of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1954 (Public Law 83-565). The availability of training grants, made possible by Public Law 565, was an incentive to many colleges and universities to begin rehabilitation counseling programs. In order to assist these programs in developing curriculum guidelines, numerous conferences on rehabilitation counselor education (RCE), and research studies on the roles and functions of the rehabilitation counselor were conducted (Ayer, Wright & Butler, 1968; Goldin, 1966; Hall & Warren, 1956; Jaques, 1959; Joint Liason Committee, 1963; Muthard & Salamone, 1969; Olshansky & Hart, 1967; Stone, 1971). In general, the curriculum guidelines specified by these studies were not intended to be complete or directly related to specific courses or educational disciplines. These facets are felt to be the responsibility of the administration of the RCE programs, and as a result, differences could be detected with respect to the emphasis placed on the various aspects of rehabilitation counselor training. This was recently confirmed by the Council On Rehabilitation Education (CORE) in the establishment of the present accreditation procedure for master's level rehabilitation counseling programs (Wright, Reagles & Scorzelli, 1973).

Recently, there has been a period of rapid expansion of new RCE programs, especially those that have been formed to provide in-service training for

1 This investigation was supported, in part, by training grant 44-P-05364/1-01 from the Rehabilitation Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health, Education & Welfare.

for their state vocational rehabilitation personnel. Included in the group of newly formed RCE programs is Northeastern University, initiated in 1972. The graduate program at Northeastern is interdepartmental, with students taking the majority of their 48 credits of course work in the Departments of Counselor Education and Rehabilitation Administration. Concurrently with their academic preparation, all students are involved in a nine month practicum experience at a rehabilitation agency or facility. In 1973, the program received RSA funds in order to develop a vocational rehabilitation emphasis, with specific concern and orientation to the state rehabilitation agency's service and training needs. In order to assess the relevancy of the new curriculum, a job task analysis is presently being conducted. The results of the task analysis will be used as the basis for curriculum and instructional planning. This article will present some of the preliminary findings of this research.

Method

A questionnaire was developed to be used with employed rehabilitation counselors in the New England region (Region 1). The model that provided the basis for the instrument conceptualized the rehabilitation counselor as a counselor-coordinator, who incorporates counseling with a parallel responsibility for the continuity of services (Ayer, Wright, & Butler, 1968; Scorzelli, 1973). Item generation came from several sources. The primary source was obtained from a thorough review of the literature on the roles and functions of the rehabilitation counselor.

The initial form of the instrument was pre-tested on a group of 12 employed vocational rehabilitation counselors in the Boston area, and reviewed by the RCE faculty and current students at Northeastern. The final instrument

consisted of 87 job duties categorized under 17 general functions. The rehabilitation counselors were asked to respond to each item by rating (four point scale) the appropriateness of the tasks based on their "knowledge of the roles and functions of the rehabilitation counselor."

Sample

The target population consisted of those rehabilitation counselors in Region I employed in state VR agencies and rehabilitation facilities. These two work settings were chosen because they are the primary sources of employment for rehabilitation counselors (Rehabilitation Services Administration, 1971). Utilizing directories of rehabilitation facilities and state VR agencies, in New England, a representative sample of 32 state agencies and 36 facilities were selected. Questionnaires were then mailed to the supervisors and/or directors of these employment settings (two per agency and one per facility), and they were asked to give the instruments to one of their counselors to complete and return. Based on this method of selective sampling, a total of 100 questionnaires were mailed. However, the initial sample was reduced to 87 because 13 questionnaires were returned as nondeliverable. Of those 87 counselors who received the instruments, 55 responded, and this was a 63% return rate.

Results

The majority of the counselors who returned the questionnaires were males (74%), under 35 years of age (67%), and almost half of these had graduate degrees in rehabilitation counseling (46%). Although intended for practioners, 27% of the sample reported job titles of supervisors.

A cursory inspection of the means of the 17 general counselor functions indicated that the respondents from both the agencies and facilities were

Insert Table 1 about here

similar with respect to their ratings (see Table 1). This was confirmed by use of the Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed test in which there were no significan differences between the two groups, T=47. The highest ratings were given to the "utilization of community agencies and professionals," "provision of training services," and the "determination of client eligibility " In contrast, "group counseling," "follow-up," and the "supervision of rehabilitation personnel" were rated the lowest by the employed counselors.

In considering the specific job tasks, a similar trend was observed. That is, the tasks rated the highest were mainly clustered under "client elgibility," "vocational counseling," and "provision of training services," while those rated the lowest were in the areas of "group counseling," "follow-up," and "supervision of rehabilitation personnel." Deviations from the means of the general counselor functions occurred only in two instances, involving the "administration of psychological tests," and "performing therapeutic counseling on a regular basis" (see Table 2).

Insert Table 2 about here

Discussion

In general, the results of this study are in agreement with the previous research conducted on the roles and functions of the rehabilitation counselor, supporting the model of the counselor-coordinator (Muthard & Salamone, 1969).

Table 1

Mean Ratings and Ranks of Functional Categories as Rated by Employed Rehabilitation Counselors

Categories	Agency (n=40)		Facility (n=15)		Total (n=55)	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Case Finding	3.01	14	3.02	15	3.01	14
Medical Eval./Referral	3.34	6	3.05	13.5	3.26	6
Psychol. Eval./Referral	3.09	11	3.07	12	3.08	12
Client Elgibility	3.56	5	3.61	3.5	3.57	4
Vocational Counseling	3.62	3.5	3.77	1	3.66	3
Therapeutic Counseling	3.12	10	3.11	10	3.12	11
Vocational Eval.	3.28	7	3.15	9	3.25	7
Work Adjust. Counseling	3.20	8	3.23	8	3.21	8
Group Counseling	2.00	17	2.40	17	2.10	17
Training Services	3.77	1	3.61	3.5	3.73	2
Restoration Services	3.62	3.5	3.38	5	3.56	5
Coordination/Case Management	3.08	12	3.37	6	3.16	9.5
Utilization of Community Agencies & Professionals	3.74	2	3.73	2	3.74	1
Job Placement	3.13	9	3.26	7	3.16	9.5
Follow-up	2.57	15	3.05	13.5	2.69	15
Supervision Rehab. Personnel	2.30	16	2.85	16	2.44	16

Ratings: Extremely-4, Moderately-3, Slightly-2, Not at all-1

Table 2

Mean Ratings of Job Tasks Rated the Highest and Lowest by Employed Rehabilitation Counselors

Job Tasks	Agency (n=40) Mean	Facility (n=15) Mean
Highest		
Evaluates vocational and educational training needed.	3.9	3.78
With client, determines what type of training is most feasible.	3.9	3.78
Helps client accept vocational limitation of disability.	3.82	3.78
Evaluates client's progress at regular intervals.	3.82	3.78
Develops full knowledge of community and vocational resources.	3.82	3.78
Assists client in goal setting and decision making.	3.80	3.86
Lowest		
Administers psychological tests.	1.42	1.71
Group work, clients with similar disabilities.	1.78	2.36
Group work, personal and social adjustment.	1.85	2.14
Evaluates work performance of other professionals.	1.98	2.57
Contacts client occassionally after completion of services.	2.18	2.57
Performs therapeutic counseling on a regular basis.	2.2	2.64

With respect to curriculum development, several trends were observed. First of all, the results suggest an emphasis on vocational counseling skills, community resources, and methods of client evaluation. Furthermore, although not denying the usefulness of group counseling skills, it appears that group method courses may not be that applicable at the master's level. Similarly, the administration of psychological tests, supervisory skills would also appear to be an area of low priority in rehabilitation counselor training.

Although previous research on RCE program content (Hall & Warren, 1956; Joint Liaison Committee, 1963) and present Rehabilitation Services Administration guidelines stress the importance of job placement and follow-up services, the preliminary results of this study appears to suggest the contrary. However, the relatively moderate to low ratings given to these rehabilitation counseling functions may not indicate that the practioners viewed them as unimportant, but instead, felt that might be more efficient and practical to relinquish job placement and follow-up to support personnel and para-professionals.

Even though the lack of a complete return prevents any wide spread generalizations, this research, once completed will be of great assistance to the rehabilitation counseling program at Northeastern University in the development of relevant training objectives for the in-service needs of vocational rehabilitation personnel. This is especially important due to the one year curriculum which often restricts the number of courses offered. Furthermore, the job task outline could be an useful tool in the curriculum and instructional planning of other

newly formed RCE programs, by providing information to aid the decision making process of curriculum development, and by filling the gap that is often left open by the reliance on general curriculum guidelines.

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